

Message Text

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44

ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9197

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 4532

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ENRG, DR, RQ

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH PUERTO RICAN GOVERNOR HERNANDEZ COLON

1. DURING HOUR-LONG MEETING ON NOV 2 WITH GOVERNOR HERNANDEZ COLON AND HIS SECRETARY OF STATE DR.VICTOR PONS, WE COVERED IN BROAD TERMS DEVELOPMENTS IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC,THOSE IN PUERTO RICO, DOMINICAN-PUERTO RICAN RELATIONSHIPS, AND INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENTS.

GOVERNOR HERNANDEZ IMPRESSED ME AS QUITE SERIOUS AND A BIT RESERVED, ALTHOUGH HE SMILES QUICKLY WHEN PHRASES APPEAL TO HIM.

2. DURING MY DESCRIPTION OF THE DOMINICAN POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION AND THEIR FUTURE (CAVEATED BY MY TWO MONTHS' EXPERIENCE), HERNANDEZ WAS PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN THE ACTIVITIES OF JUAN BOSCH. I MENTIONED THAT BOSCH SEEMED TO BE TAKING THE LEAD IN

THE BEHIND-THE-SCENES MANEUVERING OF THE OPPOSITION PARTIES TOWARD UNITY, BUT THAT BOSCH HIMSELF DID NOT AT THIS JUNCTURE APPEAR TO BE A LIKELY CANDIDATE FOR THE PRESIDENCY.

3. WITH REGARD TO DEVELOPMENTS IN PUERTO RICO, THE GOVERNOR SAID HE WAS PLACING GREATER STRESS ON AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT, A SECTOR HE REGARDED AS HAVING BEEN NEGLECTED IN PUERTO RICO'S DRIVE TOWARD INDUSTRIALIZATION. HE MENTIONED, TO MY SURPRISE, THAT TOURISM WAS NOT A CRUCIAL ELEMENT OF THE PUERTO RICAN ECONOMY, ACCOUNTING FOR
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ONLY SOME THREE PERCENT OF GNP. HE STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF

IMPROVEMENT IN HEALTH SERVICES AS ONE OF HIS GOALS. HE ALLUDED TO DOMESTIC U.S. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND SAID THAT HE HAD UNDER CONSIDERATION AN AMENDMENT TO THE PUERTO RICAN CONSTITUTION WHICH WOULD REQUIRE THE SECOND HIGHEST RANKING GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL THE SECRETARY OF STATE TO BE POPULARLY ELECTED. CURRENTLY, HE IS APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR AND CONFIRMED BY BOTH HOUSES OF THE PUERTO RICAN CONGRESS.

4. THE GOVERNOR MANIFESTED CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS ABOUT WHICH HE APPEARED INADEQUATELY INFORMED. I RECITED THE EVENTS OF THE SECRETARY'S UN LUNCHEON SPEECH WHICH HAD LED TO THE PROSPECTIVE BOGATA MEETING OF LA FON MINS.

5. ON PUERTO RICAN-DOMINICAN AFFAIRS I EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT HE AND

HIS ADVISORS WOULD KEEP THE EMBASSY INFORMED REGARDING PUERTO RICAN INTERESTS IN THE DR. I SAID THAT I COULD PROMOTE US INTERESTS, INCLUDING OF COURSE THOSE OF PUERTO RICO, MORE EFFECTIVELY IF WE MAINTAINED CLOSE LIAISON. THE GOVERNOR AGREED. FROM THAT GENERAL CONSIDERATION WE MOVED TO THE SUPERPORT AND THANKS TO THE DEPT'S VERY HELPFUL GUIDANCE, I STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE TWO PARTIES DIRECTLY CONCERNED. I MENTIONED FON SEC GOMEZ' DESIRE FOR A ROUND TABLE FACTUAL DISCUSSION AND HIS UNDERTAKING

TO ARRANGE A MEETING WITH PRESIDENT BALAGUER. GOVERNOR HERNANDEZ THEREUPON INSTRUCTED PONS TO PUT TOGETHER A TEAM TO PROCEED TO SANTO DOMINGO AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE.
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